

Education for Business

Is business administration more an art than a science? If so, can it be taught?

If you think the answer to the first question is "Yes" and to the second "No," there are thousands of college students and hundreds of institutions of higher education to say you nay. One out of every five men undergraduates today is majoring in business; one-seventh of all college graduates—this total includes the girls—take degrees in business administration. They are able to do this in schools or departments of business at 587 accredited colleges and universities. What is more, having taken their B.A. or B.S. in business, they may go on to take the M.A. or M.B.A. at 158 institutions and the Ph.D. at 29.

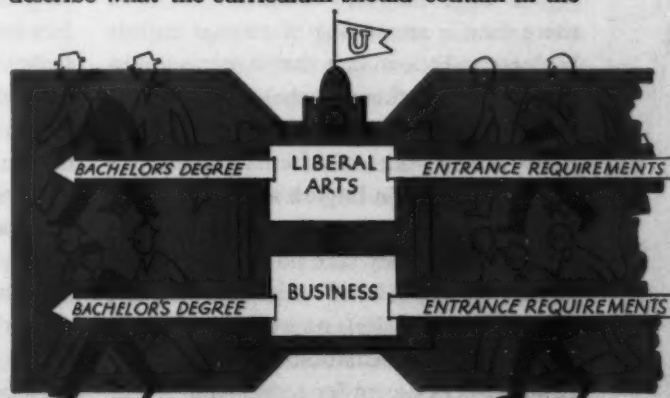
Presumably these students and these schools do believe that business administration can be successfully taught as an academic discipline. Not all of the people who should know—men who have risen to top careers in business management—agree with them. Nor do all educators believe that in most cases business is being presented as an academic subject in the true sense of the word "academic."

Nonetheless the schools and departments of business exist, and there are seemingly endless numbers of students in them and waiting to enter them. On many campuses, more students are majoring in business than in economics and all other social science subjects combined. In the period between the mid-1930's and mid-1950's, the number of undergraduate business degrees multiplied five times while the total of liberal arts degrees merely doubled. The growth of the field has been so large and so rapid that the business schools have had little chance to get their bearings.

These and other circumstances made the time more than ripe for a major study to be made of education

for business in the nation's colleges and universities. Several years ago, Carnegie Corporation made a grant to enable Frank C. Pierson, professor of economics at Swarthmore College, to make such a survey and analysis. The product of his labors, a book running to more than 700 pages which includes chapters by 13 other specialists, will be published November 2 by McGraw-Hill Book Company as the third title in the Carnegie Series in Education. (A similar study, under the auspices of the Ford Foundation, was launched at about the same time. Although the two surveys were made independently, the authors of the Ford study, Robert A. Gordon and James E. Howell, arrived at many of the same conclusions as did Professor Pierson.)

The Education of American Businessmen describes the many forms preparation for business can take—company management development programs, university programs for practicing executives, evening and extension programs, the roles of the liberal arts, engineering, and junior colleges in preparing students for careers in business. In addition, other chapters describe what the curriculum should contain in the



way of specific subjects such as finance, accounting, marketing, personnel management and industrial relations, and so on. In view of the requirements of space and the interests of the majority of the *QUARTERLY* readers, however, this article will provide a summary only of some of Mr. Pierson's findings and recommendations with respect to formal business education programs at the undergraduate level in our colleges and universities.

First and unfortunately, it must be said frankly that most of these programs are not very good, and that they are not very good in a number of ways. Their academic quality is generally low—low from the standpoints of course content, of the standard of work demanded of students, of the design of the curriculum, of the subjects covered in specific courses. One of Professor Pierson's more striking illustrations among the latter is a course in "Hotel Front Office Procedures," offered at a well-known Western university, which includes instruction on "physical layout of the hotel front office, procedure used in registering guests, keeping records and accounts." Another such course, this given at a large Southern university, is titled "Principles of Baking: Cakes and Variety Products."

While not by any means typical of business school offerings, courses of this sort are indicative of work which is typical—secretarial science, elementary bookkeeping, and other routine office procedures. But perhaps more important than what business students do take is what they don't take.

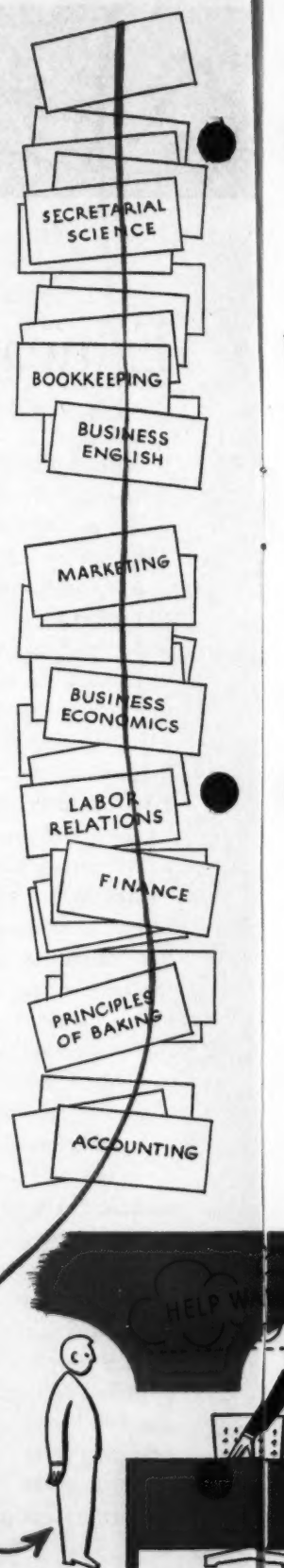
The huge majority of them take little more than a smattering of courses outside business, so little in fact that it seems a misnomer to call them Bachelors of Arts or Science when they graduate. The vast majority take no work in the humanities outside of a single course in English and perhaps one in history (these are usually university-wide requirements); they take no work *whatsoever* in any of the "hard" sciences (biology, chemistry, or physics); no work *whatsoever* in college-level mathematics; no work in the social sciences except for economics.

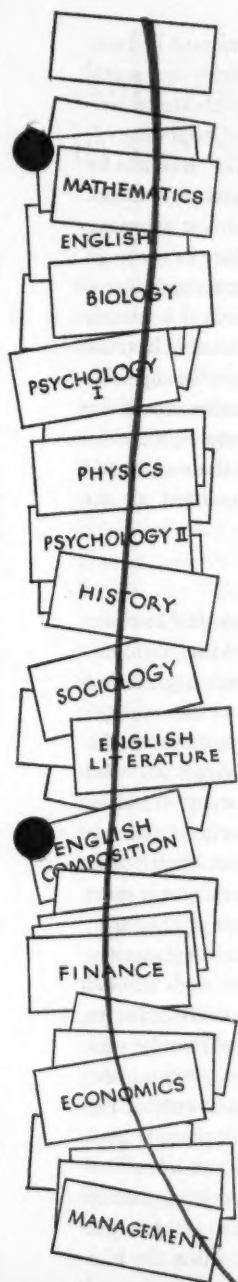
Instead they take many, many credit hours—sometimes 75 per cent—in business principles and specialties. Often they devote seven or eight courses to a particular major on top of 15 or so general business courses. Much of this work is of a routine, technical, and descriptive nature.

Many would argue that such subjects simply have no place in institutions of higher learning. But even if we were to lay such a question aside, even if we were to say that perhaps the dignity which attaches to the words "university" and "college" is not after all so very important, another fundamental question remains. That is, granting that their quality is not high from the academic point of view, do the business schools justify their existence in other terms? Does the system give the best possible preparation for business careers?

The evidence, taken from the mouths of top businessmen themselves, seems to be that it does not. Professor Pierson conducted intensive interviews with a number of company management personnel; the authors of the Ford study interviewed management in 87 different firms. There was substantial agreement that what is needed at the undergraduate level is work which will develop general capacities and understandings, and that an exposure to the major fields of learning is the best way for this to be achieved. Almost all the company spokesmen, personnel recruiters included, agreed that only a limited amount of undergraduate specialization was desirable in any given business subject. In fact, according to Professor Pierson, "except in a few scientific and high technical areas, most companies are not seriously lacking for specialized personnel; there is a nearly universal scarcity, however, of men who are well versed in some phase of business operations and who at the same time can see ahead to the broader reaches of daily problems."

Perhaps the strongest case for liberal arts education was put by Clarence Randall, whose achievements in business scarcely need recounting:





"Standing as I do on the plateau of retirement and looking over my shoulder at my life," he said, "I can see with startling clarity that the greatest asset I have had in business from the point of view of personal preparation was the general education that I received at Harvard. I have no shadow of a doubt that the early selection of a specialty would have been a long-time limitation in my life, even though for a few years I might have earned more money."

Having weighed all the evidence, Professor Pierson is convinced that the best preparation at the undergraduate level for business careers lies in heavy concentration on the underlying disciplines—English, economics, history, psychology, and mathematics. This would naturally mean that much less attention could be given to the applied business subjects.

If this conclusion were widely accepted and acted upon, it would revolutionize the programs of the undergraduate business schools. It would also—and here lies one of the problems—revolutionize the character of the student body.

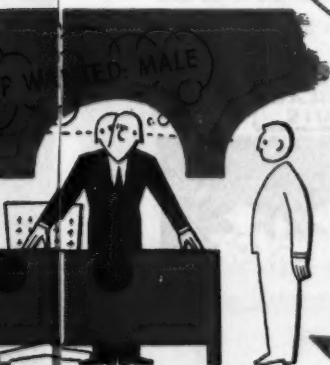
Intelligence test scores reveal that business students on the average fall near the very bottom of the ranking list among the various campus groups—far below such elite categories as the physicists and chemists, well below the more prosaic majors in English, psychology, economics, etc. Only a very few—perhaps three or four—of the business schools screen applicants or have selective admissions policies. Many of the students now in the business schools would not meet the standards for graduation if they were required to take academic courses as taught in other parts of the university.

This does not mean—and Professor Pierson is emphatic on this—that there would be no place to go for the students who were not capable of carrying a demanding program of academic work. Other institutions—junior and community colleges, technical schools, etc.—are perfectly well qualified to give good courses in the applied business subjects. Hotel front office procedure could be

learned in such institutions; it is not inconceivable that it could be learned even in a hotel front office. In addition, many of the more legitimate routine, detailed, and technical subjects which now form the bulk of the business school curriculum would be offered in these more appropriate institutions.

Undergraduate education for business, then, in Professor Pierson's best-of-all-possible worlds, would look something like this. A very great many of the applied business subjects would be offered outside the university setting. Young men and women who lacked the innate capacity for top managerial positions would receive good training in these other institutions. The more academically talented students wanting business careers would attend colleges and universities where they would, in effect, take a somewhat modified liberal arts curriculum with a limited—that is, non-specialized—grounding in a few business subjects. Many of these students would probably go on to graduate schools of business for further preparation, but those who did not would still qualify for beginning jobs in business.

This kind of reform would effect changes all along the line. Businesses would still be assured of attracting large numbers of recruits with the minimum specific skills needed for lower level responsibilities. Top management would have hopes of gaining personnel well qualified to take over some day—both because the students would have had broader and more rigorous undergraduate training, and because the upgrading of business education in the colleges might attract some better students. Finally, the business schools themselves might gain a prestige and respect which they have not had in either the academic or business setting. By shifting the balance of their work to the underlying disciplines, and by tying the business studies more closely to these disciplines, "They can achieve the leadership role which is their due," according to Professor Pierson. "If they do not, it is hard to see why they should continue to enjoy university status at all."



Technicians Needed: Where to Get Them?

Everyone talks about the shortage of engineers. Hardly anyone talks about an even more acute shortage—of engineering technicians—although a number of people are trying to do something about it.

A technician is to an engineer what a nurse is to a physician. Or to put it another way, a technician is a middle-man between the engineer, who designs, and the mechanic, who has manual skills and dexterities. He is the translator, the man with a foot in both fields. There are not enough of him. It is generally conceded that there should be about three technicians for every engineer; as a matter of fact there are about two engineers for every technician.

The Technical Institutes

How are these few technicians produced? As things now stand, many industries grow their own without quite realizing what they are doing. Bright mechanics often fill technicians' roles. And some engineers are being used as technicians. There are, however, other sources of supply of well-trained engineering technicians, sources which are too little known. These are the 36 institutions—primarily technical institutes but some junior colleges and universities—which offer a total of 116 technical curriculums accredited by the Engineers' Council for Professional

Development. The E.C.P.D. is an independent agency built upon joint representation from all major branches of the engineering profession.

Curiously enough, despite the widely acknowledged shortage of technological personnel in American industry, a good many of these technical institutes and technical institute programs in junior or senior colleges suffer for lack of students. This is a result of ignorance and misunderstanding. Some of that should be cleared up with the publication next month by McGraw-Hill Book Company of *The Technical Institute in America*, by G. Ross Henninger, the report of a study sponsored by the American Society for Engineering Education. The survey was made possible by a Carnegie grant.

The concluding chapter of the book, "Problems and Potentialities of the Technical Institute," was distributed at the annual meeting, last June, of the sponsoring Society, where it was greeted with lively interest. The concern which members of the engineering profession are showing is, in fact, one of the most hopeful indications that the technical institutes will ultimately come into their own, because as Mr. Henninger points out, there is no generally accepted pattern of professional recognition for the engineering technician. "In this respect the medical technician, the dental technician, and various

other comparable technicians in business and professional fields are much better off than is the graduate technician in engineering and technology."

The problem of "status" seems to be all-pervasive. Parents and high school teachers tend to urge almost everyone of average or better ability to try to go to college. There is little recognition of the fact that good technical institutes offer appropriate and valuable instruction for youngsters of specific capabilities, and that the institutes should be recognized as legitimate entities in their own right rather than as "feeders" to engineering colleges or as glorified trade schools.

The Curriculum

Actually the good technical institute curriculum is, and should be, different from that of either an engineering school or a trade school. The embryo technician—according to one man the ideal technician is a bright boy who likes to get his hands dirty—receives instruction in mathematics, basic science, drafting, and English. On the basis of this study he then specializes in some one field such as electronic, chemical, mechanical, or electrical engineering.

Industry is crying for such trained men, and the good institutes exist to supply them. But they will not be supplied in anything like the numbers needed until the national cult of the B.A. is reduced—until parents and teachers and counselors can learn that the important thing is not necessarily to get Johnny a B.A. but to let him get the kind of education which fits him for the work he is best fitted to do and which he most wants to do.



Americans Learn Russian in the Soviet Union

On the very day that Chairman Khrushchev finished his hectic and exhausting tour of our country and settled down at Camp David for talks with President Eisenhower, 20 Americans arrived home from his country looking every bit as tired as he did. Perhaps even more so, despite the fact that the Chairman is almost 50 years older than most members of the groggy little group which had just spent 30 days in the U.S.S.R.

The Americans, all undergraduates, had served as guinea pigs in a language-learning experiment, and a large part of their physical and emotional exhaustion sprang from the circumstance that in theory, at least, they had not spoken their native tongue for more than five weeks. In this respect, if no other, Premier Khrushchev had an easier time of it than they did.

The purpose of the experiment was to try to learn what is the minimum time in which an American undergraduate with reasonable linguistic facility can master the Russian language, given optimum conditions. What *are* the optimum conditions? Do they include spending a period of time in the Soviet Union, or could one learn Russian just as well in an intensive language workshop in this country?

We don't have the answers yet, and won't have until more trials have been made, but here is the story of this one experiment.

Some months ago, Carnegie Corporation made a grant to enable the Inter-University Committee on Travel Grants, which was established several years earlier with Carnegie funds, to carry out a plan whereby a few undergraduates would spend the summer in intensive Russian study both in this

country and in the U.S.S.R. The idea was, and still is, that eventually it will be a regular exchange program, with a certain number of Russians coming here each summer to learn English in a university workshop, and the same number of Americans going there to do the same with Russian. There was not time this year, however, to complete the necessary complicated negotiations with the Soviet Ministry of Education and the U.S. Department of State, but the Inter-University Committee decided to go ahead with a modified program this summer.

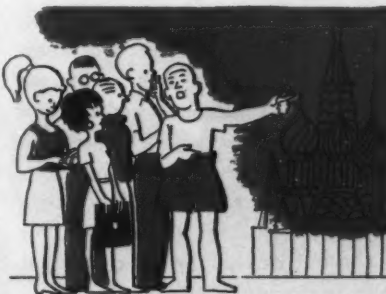
Scientists and Humanists

It was decided to restrict this summer's experiment to 20 students who had already received at least one year of Russian language training in any of five institutions—Bryn Mawr, Dartmouth, Haverford, and Swarthmore Colleges, and Stanford University. To everyone's pleased surprise, eight of the students whose Russian ability qualified them for the program were science majors—a sign of the growing recognition that Russian is supplanting German and other languages as a necessary tool for scientists. Others in the group had majors in languages, literature, English, history, Russian civilization, etc. Once the young men and women had been selected, they were tested on their language facility and enrolled for six- or eight-week sessions in one of two intensive language workshops—Indiana University for the less advanced students, Middlebury College for those with two or more years of Russian. A typical day would include perhaps three hours of Russian conversation in the morning, an hour's laboratory work in the afternoon, a couple

of hours of reading and writing Russian, and evening lectures in Russian on Russia.

Following these workshops the students were again tested on their understanding and speaking ability, and then gathered in New York to embark on their odyssey. They were accompanied by three "senior" Americans—senior in years as well as in knowledge of the Russian language and culture. The group flew to London, presumably speaking English all the way, and then boarded a Soviet steamer, the *Baltika*, for the five-day journey to Leningrad. As they went up the gangplank the "pledge" went into effect—that is, the promise by each member of the group that he would speak nothing but Russian until he landed in England again five weeks later.

The trip on the *Baltika*, whose crew members are all Russian, proved to be a good transition period. "It gave us a chance to see if our Russian could be understood by *real* Russians," said one girl. "That was a question in our minds!" Actually the students got along famously with the Russian crew members and passengers, but ran into a modification of a problem President Eisenhower himself encountered: that in warming relations with the Russians we run the risk of cooling them with our allies. Several of the American girl students were given state-rooms with Englishwomen whose husbands were quartered elsewhere on the ship. The English wives resented the Americans' refusal to speak English, and the situation reached an ironic





climax when one of the English husbands told a tour leader: "Your girls listen to what our wives say, and we know they know what our wives are saying. Then they talk in Russian and our wives do not know what they are saying. This whole thing is a stupid American idea, and is *bad* for international relations."

While in the U.S.S.R., the Americans spent several days each in Leningrad, Moscow, Stalingrad, took a river steamer on the Volga-Don Canal to Rostov, went to Kiev, and then returned to Leningrad for a final week before boarding another Soviet steamer for England. The trip inevitably had something of a "tourist-y" flavor. Most of the students believe that they would have gained more if they had spent a longer time in fewer places. And they believe that the experience in Russia, the perfect language laboratory, would have been enhanced if it had been salted with some formal study of the language there. Even as it was they had plenty of opportunity to practice.

Mornings were generally devoted to trips to museums and libraries and public monuments, etc., where the guides all spoke Russian. The evenings were also spent in places where Russian was spoken—theaters and movies, or with Russian friends. The afternoons, which were free, were the times when the students had the best opportunity to meet Soviet citizens on an informal basis. As one boy put it, "You'd go sit in a park reading a copy of *Pravda* or something, so they'd know you spoke Russian, and in no time at all you'd be surrounded."

The Americans report that they were treated with unfailing friendliness and kindness by all the Russians they met. In fact, the Russians were almost *too* polite, considering that the primary purpose of the visit was for the Americans to learn Russian, because the Russians were so delighted to find young Americans speaking the language, no matter how badly, that they refused to correct mistakes. They generally complimented the Americans on their language facility, "but sometimes there were twinkles in their eyes," one of the students said ruefully.

Home Again

After another steamer trip from Leningrad to London, the students flew home to be greeted by a third battery of tests to see how much their understanding and speaking ability had improved after their time in the Soviet Union. They were also, needless to say, greeted by innumerable questions about how they had reacted to their experience—an experience which was still so close in time that the students were reluctant to make final judgments. Nonetheless their impressions, albeit clouded by fatigue and excitement, reveal the conscientiousness, seriousness, and honesty of the young men and women.

The students are candid in saying that the "pledge" imposed immense emotional burdens on them, yet most of them bravely maintain that it should be required in future programs. It is clear that pressures mounted as days and weeks in the Soviet Union went by. It was not that the students could not express themselves well in talking with Russians. It was that in undergoing what was the most exciting, confusing, and emotionally charged experience in many of their young lives the students were unable to share their impressions with each other in their own language, to reveal the depths and nuances of new experiences and feelings. This is painful.

On the other hand, there is no doubt that maintenance of the pledge forced the students to try to express ideas instead of making mere comments on the state of weather or food. One girl said that the first time she really got to this point was when she got into an argument about segregation with a Southerner in the group. "It was the first time we were really concerned with the *thought*," she said, "rather than the mechanics of speaking. After that we had all kinds of philosophical and political discussions."

Another impression one gains is that, although they were undergoing a very stimulating experience, the students felt that in some ways they had grown intellectually stale. One young man wrote: "For three months we have been living on thought capital previously acquired. We have not had the time to read seriously, and to renew these resources." He went on to point out a paradoxical morale problem: that the students were subjected to group living and never had time for prolonged solitude; yet, he said, "each of us was ever alone; communication, on levels deeper than those of everyday conversation, was rendered impossible by our limited ability in Russian. Meeting other people in a real sense is difficult even in English. The problems of resources and morale are not independent: they combine to form a strange, dream-like background for intensive language study, where a man is never alone yet always alone—unable to exercise many dimensions of his mental capacity, and unable to refresh them."

The same young man also wrote, however, "The pain and discomforts that were a part of the program were not necessarily a bad thing. Pain, though discouraging and perplexing, can sharpen perceptive and sensitive capacities, and lead to a higher understanding. Accomplishment without pain, in language study or in life, is rare or fictitious."

Man with an Idea

Three years ago Dexter Perkins, the new president of the American Historical Association, chose to give his inaugural address the title "We Shall Gladly Teach." This would not seem remarkable—a very large proportion of the Association's members are college teachers—except for the fact that in the more than 70-year history of the organization no presidential address had ever centered on this major function of the profession.

As seen by Dexter Perkins, the historian's primary function is to communicate with people, including students. He admits that the spoken word is not the only medium of communication. "There are certainly other ways of serving God than by talking to undergraduates, or even to graduates." Nonetheless, he reminded his fellow historians, "we have tended to exalt the written over the spoken word in the practice of our profession." Although he himself is the author of a dozen books on American history, he would prefer to be remembered as a teacher of history rather than as a writer of history.

Dr. Perkins has been practicing what he preaches for more than 40 years. He taught at the University of Rochester from 1915 to 1953, and for six years at Cornell. He holds the unusual distinction of being professor emeritus at both universities. In 1945-46 he gave a general course in U.S. history at Cambridge, as the first American to occupy an endowed chair there.

Early in his career, Professor Perkins acknowledges, he was content to go along giving part of his time to teaching undergraduates and part to writing, mentally keeping each function in a separate compartment. He soon became convinced, however, that the separation was a false one. He also

became convinced that, "for all but the greatest and most imaginative scholar," the arena in which historians can play their most important role is the classroom. "Here is our greatest chance of usefulness, our largest hope. The young men and women who participate in our instruction are eager and anxious to learn from us; they are capable of benefiting by our multiplied historical experience; they may be warmed by our personalities and fired with a generous view of life and a wider view of knowledge."

Better Teachers

Given his dedication to teaching, it is not surprising that Professor Perkins has devoted much time and energy to thinking about ways to produce better teachers. Immediately after the war, he was able to inaugurate a graduate program at Rochester which emphasized the teaching function.

Only five candidates were admitted to the program each year. All of them were in U.S. history. During the first year they all assisted in the undergraduate U.S. history courses; the second year, each had to give ten lectures before a class. In addition, all had to take four special seminars: one in bibliography and criticism; another in the philosophy of history ("All philosophies are vulnerable, but still students should get the overview," says Professor Perkins); one in relations between Europe and America; and a final one on the great historians, so that the future teachers would become familiar with the literature and with the historians who wrote well. In other respects the program was conventional, in that the traditional oral examination and a dissertation were required.

Even though he is ostensibly retired, Dr. Perkins continues to serve the teaching profession. For two years he

has been chairman of the American Historical Association's committee on graduate education in history, which will next year complete a study made under a Carnegie grant. Interviews with many historians, as well as questionnaires which have been sent to all graduate departments of history and to several hundred undergraduate departments, reveal widespread concern among historians.

Although there seem to be a multitude of problems, four already stand out in the minds of most historians. There seems to be general acknowledgment that the teaching function, as distinguished from the research function, has not been sufficiently emphasized in the training of historians. In addition, many historians are convinced that the time commonly required to complete the Ph.D. is unreasonable; a closely related problem is the fact that too few superior students have the financial wherewithal to devote themselves full-time for three or four years to graduate study. Finally, faculties in Ph.D.-granting departments are so badly overworked because of the increasing numbers of both undergraduate and graduate students that they cannot give adequate time to either.

Fortunately the historians are actively looking for ways to overcome the problems facing their profession, and the A.H.A. survey will report on innovations which are being tried out in various universities. At the conclusion of the study Professor Perkins and his committee of distinguished historians will write a report. One may be sure that it will contain many suggestions about the improvement of teaching,



and probably reflect Dr. Perkins' convictions about the role of historians:

"We—and we alone with the philosophers—still place our faith in, and rest our profession on, the ancient Latin maxim, 'Nothing human is alien to me.' We alone, and the philosophers, must assert in an age of increasing specialization the majestic doctrine that it is man's duty to know and inquire with regard to everything that concerns him. We alone, with the philosophers, have an opportunity to communicate to our students that sense of excitement which comes from the very broadest view of human activity."

New Book

James Bryant Conant's *The Child, the Parent, and the State*, was published October 26 by Harvard University Press. The book's four chapters are based upon lectures he has given during the past year, all dealing with public secondary education in the United States. He develops in detail arguments for certain recommendations he had made in his *The American High School Today*, published last January by McGraw-Hill Book Company. In the new book he also discusses for the first time the difficult and controversial subject of the financing of public education.

Dr. Conant's lectures were based on conclusions he reached during the course of a two-year study of American public secondary education. His work was supported by Carnegie Corporation, as is a study he is now making of other educational levels.

Staff News

Nancy B. Ferguson has been made an administrative assistant. Mrs. Ferguson joined the Corporation staff in 1956 as secretary to Florence Anderson, secretary of the Corporation.

Alan Pifer, executive associate in the Corporation's Commonwealth pro-

gram, is planning a trip to Africa for the months of January and February. He will go to Uganda, Kenya, Tanganyika, the Central African Federation, and the British colony of Basutoland.

New Grants

Grants amounting to \$117,800 were voted during the final quarter of the fiscal year 1958-59, which ended September 30. The total appropriations for the year amounted to \$8,270,210.

The income for the year was \$9,815,000, of which \$1,000,000 had been set aside to meet commitments, including those for teachers' pensions, incurred in previous years. It is the Corporation's policy to spend all income during the year in which it is received.

Included among the grants voted recently are those listed below:

United States

American Academy of Arts and Sciences, for conferences on the social implications of science, \$42,800.

University of Chicago, for initial support of the Committee for the Comparative Study of New Nations, \$8,600.

Columbia University, for an inter-university program of undergraduate study abroad in the field of anthropology, \$40,500.

Princeton University, for an inter-university program of undergraduate study abroad in the field of international relations, \$75,000.

Syracuse University, for expenses of a conference on reading research, \$5,000.

Wellesley College, for an experiment in teaching economics, \$10,000.

Commonwealth

University College of Ghana, for a seminar on the development of selection techniques in West Africa, \$10,000.

New Zealand Library Association, for a survey of the resources of New Zealand libraries, \$5,000.

Carnegie Corporation of New York Quarterly

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Helen Rowan, *Editor*

Each issue of the Quarterly describes only a few of many Carnegie-supported projects in a variety of fields. Full listings of all the Corporation's activities are contained in its annual reports, which usually are published in January.

Carnegie Corporation of New York is a philanthropic foundation created by Andrew Carnegie in 1911 for the advancement and diffusion of knowledge and understanding. It has a basic endowment of \$135 million and its present assets, reckoned at cost value, are approximately \$196 million. The income from \$12 million of this fund may be used in certain British Commonwealth areas; all other income must be spent in the United States.

The Corporation is primarily interested in higher education and in certain aspects of public and international affairs. Grants are made to colleges and universities, professional associations, and other educational organizations for specific programs. In higher education, these include basic research, studies of educational developments, training opportunities for teachers and administrators, and other educational projects of an experimental nature. In public and international affairs, the Corporation is concerned primarily with research and training programs which promise increased understanding of the problems the nation faces and which provide better selection and training of young men and women who must deal with these problems.

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